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STATE FOR NEA/FO, NEA/I, NEA/MAG - HOPKINS, HARRIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/07/2017  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [IZ](#) [TS](#)  
SUBJECT: IRAQI AMBASSADOR REQUESTS US ASSISTANCE WITH MFA

REF: A. TUNIS 180  
[B](#). TUNIS 169  
[C](#). 06 TUNIS 2178  
[D](#). 05 TUNIS 2569

Classified By: AMBASSADOR ROBERT F. GODEC FOR REASONS 1.4 (b) AND (d)

[1](#). (U) This is an action request. Please see para 6.

[2](#). (C) SUMMARY: During a February 8 meeting with Ambassador, Iraqi Ambassador Ghazi Tahar Khaled expressed his frustration with Tunisian bureaucracy and the GOT's (and other Arab governments') refusal to follow through on their statements of support for the GOI. Khaled lamented the GOT's unwillingness to engage on any bilateral issues, including the proposed visit of the Iraqi Foreign Minister to Tunis. Khaled said that, despite many meetings, the issue of the Iraqi planes grounded in Tunisia remains unresolved. Khaled asked Ambassador to engage Tunisian Foreign Minister Abdallah to encourage Tunisian-Iraqi relations. END SUMMARY.

[3](#). (C) During Ambassador's February 8 courtesy call, Iraqi Ambassador Ghazi Tahar Khaled said that Tunisia, like most Arab countries, fails to fulfill its oral and written commitments to Iraq. Khaled noted that the Iraqi Interior Minister had positive discussions with Saudi Interior Minister Prince Naif bin Abdelaziz on the margins of the recent Arab Interior Ministers meeting in Tunis (Ref A), but said that he does not expect any follow-on action. Lamenting the Tunisian bureaucracy ("They're more French than the French"), Khaled said that the GOT had similarly refused to respond on almost any bilateral issue raised by the Iraqi Embassy. In particular, Khaled said that the planned December visit of Iraqi Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari to Tunis had been indefinitely postponed. Khaled noted that the Tunisian-Iraqi joint ministerial committee had not met in four or five years and that the GOT refused to give him an answer on when meetings might resume. Additionally, the two countries have many expired bilateral agreements, including those related to trade and education, which have not been renewed. Tunisian MFA bureaucracy is extremely difficult, said Khaled, and even private companies he contacts regarding Saddam-era contracts refer him to the MFA ("Even for one cent.")

[4](#). (C) Khaled was not aware of any proposed Tunisian assistance to the GOI (Ref B). Most bilateral issues are simply unresolved, said Khaled. In particular, he noted that the issue of the four Iraqi planes in Tunisia is still pending (Refs C and D). Khaled said that the GOT has asked for USD 40 million in parking, maintenance and other fees related to the 16-17 years the planes have been present in Tunisia. The GOT also refused to allow US or UK technicians to service the planes, saying Tunisians could repair them. When Khaled suggested a technical joint committee from the two Ministries of Transportation meet to discuss possible

solutions, the Tunisian MFA simply did not respond.

¶15. (C) Ambassador asked Khaled how he could support the GOI's efforts to engage Tunisia. Khaled asked Ambassador to raise his concerns with Tunisian FM Abdallah. "If you talk to the Foreign Minister, I am confident these problems will be resolved," said Khaled.

¶16. (C) COMMENT AND ACTION REQUEST: Khaled's complaints about GOT bureaucracy and lack of responsiveness are familiar themes in the Tunisian foreign diplomatic community. However, given GOT public and private statements of support for the GOI, some of these issues should be resolvable. Unless Washington agencies or Embassy Baghdad advise otherwise, Ambassador will approach Foreign Minister Abdallah or MFA Chief of Staff Hatem Atallah the week of February 12 to encourage a visit by FM Zebari.  
GODEC